



## Parent Information Network



### Advocating for Your Child Who Has Behavioral Challenges

by Jana Bays and Becky Raabe

#### Home Issues:

- Issue:** *My child's behavior is causing problems at home.*  
**Strategy:** Carefully consider what triggers behavioral problems at home. Keep a journal for a while and make notes about what events cause your child to act out inappropriately, including a description and duration of the behavior. This information may give you an idea how to avoid and handle outbursts. Your notes will be useful when you meet with professionals (teachers, counselors, etc.) to help your child.
- Issue:** *I don't know how to handle my child's behaviors.*  
**Strategy:** Disciplining your child is actually teaching him/her how to be responsible for their own behaviors. It's important that you define rules and expected behavior for your child. Let him/her know what the consequences will be. Use positive or negative consequences that teach your child how to make better choices.
- Issue:** *It seems like all I do is reprimand my child. I get so discouraged.*  
**Strategy:** Plan ahead for those times when you think your child might misbehave. Be patient and stay calm. Be a model of the good behavior you are expecting your child to have. When a situation arises don't give in to your child expecting that your child will behave. Be consistent when consequences are necessary.
- Issue:** *Our family is much happier when my child is not getting into trouble.*  
**Strategy:** Reinforce your child's positive behaviors. Reward his/her accomplishments and regularly provide positive feedback when you notice behaviors are being controlled in a positive manner. Use specific words and actions that will encourage your child to continue making good choices to control his/her behavior.
- Issue:** *Even though some days are better than others, I still don't think I can handle my child's behavioral problems by myself.*  
**Strategy:** Everyone knows parenting can be a very difficult task. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help. Ask the behavioral health agency in your community for a referral to a counselor who has experience with children who have disabilities. Ask for information about parenting classes. Don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher and ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns. The team approach can help your child manage his/her behaviors and be successful at school.

#### School Issues:

- Issue:** *My child's behavior is interfering with his/her ability to learn at school.*  
**Strategy:** Ask school staff to include goals and objectives/benchmarks in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) that include positive behavioral interventions, strategies and supports to address the disruptive behaviors.
- Issue:** *I know I'm an equal participant in the IEP process, but I don't know what to suggest.*  
**Strategy:** Determine if, and when, your child has had a behavioral evaluation. A Functional Behavior Assessment is very helpful to understand the nature of your child's problems and how to develop interventions. Ask for further testing if needed. Ask your child's special education teacher for the names and positions of the other people on your child's IEP team. School staff that provide educational and support services for your child should participate in the IEP

meeting. Recommend other professionals that should be involved in addressing the behavior plan. Suggest strategies that work at home be included in the plan. All team members need to keep an open mind to suggestions and consider unique strategies for handling a child's individual needs and then be certain to consistently carry them out.

3. **Issue:** *I'm satisfied with the IEP and behavioral plan we developed, however, I wonder if it will work? What do I do if there is a problem? I don't know if I can follow a similar behavior management plan for my child at home.*

**Strategy:** Communication with school staff is essential. At the IEP meeting, decide on the way(s) that you will be updated on your child's progress. A communication log is a good idea. Don't forget to ask whom you should contact when you have questions or concerns. Don't wait until a concern becomes a big problem. Call your contact person right away. If situations arise that are difficult to resolve, you have the right to ask for an IEP review meeting and request that special education administrators be included to problem solve. Ask for a referral to a special education advocate or support group for additional information and advice.

It's not uncommon for families to need extra help to learn skills for handling their child's challenging behavior. The school can include parent training and counseling for you under related services on the IEP if the behavior is related to your child's educational needs.

The following resources are available from the PINC Clearinghouse which can be ordered through a PIN Specialist, or by calling the PIN at 1-800-352-4558. Some of the documents can be downloaded from, [www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals](http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals).

- BR03 Reducing Problem Behaviors Through Good Academic Management
- BR04 Threats & Disruptions at School Not Tolerated
- BR06 Risk, Resilience & Learning Disability: Strengthening the Resolve of Challenged Children
- BR08 10 Things Parents Can Do for a Child Who Has ADHD
- BR14 Social Skills Strategies for Parents and Teachers
- BR18 Functional Behavioral Assessment Summary
- BR19 Recognizing Danger Signs in Relationships
- BR20 Proactive Approaches to Help Students Control Their Anger
- BR21 20 Things to Do Instead of Hurting Someone Back
- BR22 Functional Behavioral Assessment
- BR23 Strategies to Work With Students With Oppositional Defiant Disorders
- BR24 Oppositional Defiant Disorder vs Conduct Disorder

**Websites:**

Arizona Behavioral Initiative: <http://www.nau.edu/~ihd/abi/index.html>

Arizona Positive Behavior Support: <http://www.nau.edu/ihd/positive/index.html>

Behavioral-Developmental Initiatives: <http://www.b-di.com>

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